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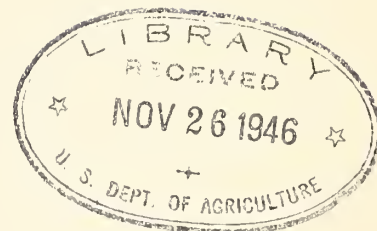
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Excerpt from a radio talk by
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District, Food and Drug Adminis-
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HOW TO READ THE LABEL

Spices



The first consideration that you should have in mind when you purchase spices is the quantity contained in the package sold to you. Spices are put up in a larger variety of sizes of packages than any other food product. You may get one-half ounce, one ounce, or two ounces or any intermediate quantity in your spice package. If you are a careful buyer, you will read the label to determine the quantity given by the various manufacturers and you will buy the package which offers the best value. Manifestly, a package containing two ounces selling for 15¢ is a better buy than a package containing one ounce which sells for 10¢. Now in order to determine the quantity in spice packages, you must read the labels. The size of the container doesn't mean anything with respect to the quantity of contents because a package that looks large many contain less quantity than one that looks much smaller. Some manufacturers put out a large size package purposely to fool you. Such packages are frequently slack filled. If you judge by the size of the package, you may think you are getting more than is actually in the package. The labels tell you definitely the quantity in each package. Now, let us consider some of the more common spices:

ALLSPICE is the dried, unripe fruit of the pimento tree which belongs to the same family as the clove tree. It gets its name "allspice" from the fact that it has been said to have the odor of all of the spices.

BLACK PEPPER is the dried immature berry of the wooded vine pepper plant which grows in the East Indian islands, Southern India, French Indo China and Siam. Depending upon the source, black pepper has somewhat different characteristics. The principal kinds of black pepper are Singapore, Acheen, Lampong, Java, Tellicherry and Alleppy. To produce ground black pepper, the pepper berries are ground into a coarse powder. There will be no way for the label reader to determine by reading the label the varieties of black pepper purchased because varieties are not often stated on labels and moreover, packages often contain mixtures of several varieties, but you may get an idea from the color of the ground product. In general, Lampong and Acheen black pepper produce a dark grayish grind. Java black pepper produces a light grayish grind. Singapore pepper gives a somewhat dark greenish grind while Alleppy and Tellicherry show a more light greenish grind.

WHITE PEPPER is thought by many to be a different product entirely from black pepper. This is not altogether true. White pepper is produced by removing the outer coating of the mature black pepper berry. This process is called decortication. The berries, with the outer coating removed, are ground to make ground white pepper. As far as pungency or strength is concerned, black pepper is stronger or hotter than white pepper.

CAYENNE PEPPER is the dried ripe fruit of *Capsicum Frutescens* or some other small fruit species of *Capsicum*. Red pepper is the dried fruit of any species of *Capsicum*. Now, a package labeled red pepper may, but does not need to be Cayenne pepper, whereas Cayenne pepper must be made from one of the small fruited species of *Capsicum* and this means, as may be expected, that Cayenne pepper may be stronger or hotter than red pepper.

PAPRIKA is the dried ripe fruit of *Capsicum Annuum*. It has a distinctive, agreeable and very mildly pungent flavor. There are two kinds of paprika known by the names of the countries of production, namely, Spanish and Hungarian. These have somewhat different color and flavor characteristics, the Hungarian being sweet and mild with a rich red color and an oily appearance. Spanish paprika is not quite so mild, is less sweet, and has a drier appearance. Labels often differentiate these two products by describing them as Hungarian or Spanish as the case may be. Rosenpaprika is Hungarian paprika prepared by grinding selected pods from which the placentae, stalk, and the stems have been removed. This is the highest grade of paprika. It is sometimes called Rose Paprika or Rosa Paprika. Koenigspaprika is Hungarian paprika prepared by grinding whole pods without selection and including the seeds and stems. It is sometimes called Kings Paprika. Olive Oil is occasionally added to paprika. This has a tendency to accentuate the red color of the product; to make it assume a richer red color. It has no other purpose. So if you see a paprika label declaring "added olive oil", you should know that the color of the product has been produced in part by the added oil.

CINNAMON is the bark of either the cinnamon or the Cassia tree. The quality of the product differs, depending upon the source and depending upon inherent qualities of different barks. Quality is represented in cinnamon by the quality and strength and amount of oil present in the bark. Some cinnamon has a mild, delightfully delicate bouquet and other cinnamon is strong and harsh and there are many cinnamons of intermediate range of flavor. Since the flavor comes from the oil in the product, to represent good quality there must be a material amount of high quality oil present. The poor qualities contain only a very small amount of oil and the lowest grades are so poor as to be essentially worthless for flavoring purposes. Ceylon Cinnamon has a mild bouquet or flavor and is a good grade for those who like a mildly flavored cinnamon. It is usually orange-yellow in color. Saigon Cinnamon is strong and pungent, has an abundance of excellent flavor, and has a dark brown color. Batavia Cinnamon is a good grade, intermediate in flavor between Ceylon and Saigon. It is generally light brown. China Cinnamon is the poorest of all cinnamons and sometimes the flavor in some of the China grades is almost lacking. It is often very dark in color. Labels sometimes declare products to be Ceylon, Saigon or Batavia cinnamon when such is the case. You will seldom, probably never, see a package labeled China Cinnamon. When labeled only as cinnamon, you have the right to expect no more than a cheap China grade, or a blend consisting mostly

of China Cinnamon. Now, my friends, it will pay you to buy the best grades of cinnamon. They will cost you more than the cheap grades, but the better grades are worth more. If you want to be sure you are getting a good grade, try tasting. After tasting a few varieties, you will soon be able to differentiate the poorest from the best. One suggestion. Cinnamon deteriorates on standing - therefore, keep your package well closed.

NUTMEG is the dried hard seed of the nutmeg tree and contains not less than 25% of fixed oil. When fully developed, it is well rounded and symmetrical. It should be known, however, that nutmegs as they come to this country are sometimes more or less shriveled. They are known as "Shrivels". Such nutmegs make a good ground product which is slightly darker in color than the powder produced by grinding unshriveled nutmegs. Sometimes punky nutmegs are used for grinding. When such nutmegs are used, a poor product results.

MACE is the dried coating surrounding the nutmeg in its shell. The shell of the nutmeg is valueless as a spice. Did you know that mace and nutmeg come from the same fruit of the same tree? Well they do. Generally speaking, we may say that there are two varieties of mace, known as East Indian Mace and West Indian Mace. East Indian Mace runs from yellow brown in color to very dark and has an excellent flavor. West Indian Mace is almost light yellow and it has less and poorer flavor than East Indian Mace. Because of the lighter color, however, West Indian Mace is used more frequently in retail packages. The housewife may taste and smell the product in judging relative quality and should remember that dark colored mace is likely to have the better flavor.

SAGE is one of the condimental foods which might be more extensively used to advantage. It is the dried leaf of the sage plant. The best quality of commercial sage comes from Austria and is generally called Dalmatian Sage. Next in quality is Italian, then French, while Greek Sage is lowest in quality and flavor. If you want the better quality sages, look for the word "Dalmatian", "French", or "Italian" on the label.

There are a great many other spice products--- berries, seeds and leaves of plants which are used in your culinary art to flavor and give zest to food. It will pay to buy the best qualities of all of these and again I say be sure that you get the proper quantity.

